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ASMUSSEN HOPES STELLAR TAP ADDS ANOTHER MEMORABLE WIN IN SATURDAY'S IROQUOIS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, Sept. 17, 2021) – Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen** arguably recorded one of the most memorable wins in his career when 2-year-old colt **Stellar Tap** broke his maiden last month at Saratoga to vault the 55-year-old conditioner past **Dale Baird** as North America's all-time leading trainer. Five weeks later, Stellar Tap is poised to tackle stakes company as the 3-1 favorite in Saturday night's \$300,000 Iroquois (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

"We've been planning on that win for a long time," Asmussen said. "It was better than anticipated. It was a wonderful moment with the entire family and we've relived it several times since."

Owned by **L and N Racing** and **Winchell Thoroughbreds**, Stellar Tap broke his maiden by 5 ¼ lengths under jockey **Ricardo Santana Jr.** The Tapit colt is out of the Medaglia d'Oro mare Gioia Stella, who is the half-sister to graded stakes winners **Nereid** and **Sea Queen**.

Also entered in the Iroquois is Stellar Tap's stablemate **Guntown**. Owned by Winchell Thoroughbreds, Guntown broke his maiden in his second start at Ellis Park. He is by the first crop of 2-year-olds from the former Asmussen-trained superstar **Gun Runner**.

"I couldn't be a bigger fan of Gun Runner," Asmussen said. "I am surprised how good they are so soon. They trained really well in spring and continue to develop. Our colt **Gunite**, who won the Hopeful, took a couple of times to break his maiden. I do think it's a good sign the further they go, the faster they get."

Saturday's 1 1/16-mile Iroquois kicks off the "Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve" and awards the Top 4 finishers 10-4-2-1 points for the first Saturday in May. The winner of the Iroquois will also get an automatic berth into the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) on Future Stars Friday at the Breeders' Cup. The Breeders' Cup World Championships are scheduled to be held on Nov. 5-6 at Del Mar.

The Iroquois was carded as Race 9 with a post time of 10:11 p.m. The first of 11 races will begin at 6 p.m. The other stakes events on the evening's program are the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII), \$300,000 Open Mind and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

The complete field for the Iroquois from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Tough to Tame** (Sophie Doyle, Chris Davis, 20-1); **Lucky Boss** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 10-1); **Roger McQueen** (Adam Beschizza, Larry Rivelli, 10-1); **Strike Hard** (Leonel Reyes, Matthew Williams, 10-1); **Magnolia Midnight** (Corey Lanerie, Dallas Stewart, 12-1); Stellar Tap (Santana, Asmussen, 3-1); **Red Knobs** (James Graham, Dale Romans, 20-1); **Major General** (Javier Castellano, Todd Pletcher, 4-1); **Guntown** (Tyler Gaffalione, Asmussen, 9-2); **Husband Material** (Florent Geroux, Jimmy Toner, 15-1); and **Bourbon Heist** (Joe Talamo, Ian Wilkes, 9-2).

Hall of Fame trainer **Todd Pletcher's** Iroquois Stakes entrant Major General and Pocahontas runner **Goddess of Fire** arrived to Churchill Downs from New York around 4:30 a.m. Friday. Jockey **Javier Castellano** is scheduled to be in Louisville on Saturday for the riding assignments.

The Pocahontas is a Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" for the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI). The 1 1/16-mile race is carded as Race 8 at 9:39 p.m.

The complete Pocahontas field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer, morning line odds): **Code for Success** (Rafael Bejarano, Vicki Oliver, 20-1); Goddess of Fire (Castellano, Pletcher, 6-1); **Mama Rina** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 12-1); **Ontheonesandtwos** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Norm Casse, 5-2); **Majestic d'Oro** (Martin Garcia, Brendan Walsh, 8-1); **Kneeships** (James Graham, Tom Amoss, 8-1); **Miss Chamita** (Gregory Romero, Michel Doualhy, 30-1); **Hidden Connection** (Reylu Gutierrez, Bret Calhoun, 9-2); **Lemieux** (Tyler Gaffalione, Mark Cassse, 10-1); and **Joyrunner** (Joe Ramos, Laura Wohlers, 10-1).

FORMER CARDS PLAYER LEVITCH GIVES 'SLAM DUNK' OF THE NIGHT AT LOUISVILLE LIVE – The lone **Downs After Dark** presented by **Budweiser** on Saturday will bring together two Louisville sports legacies under the famed Twin Spires. Former Cardinals Men's Basketball player **David Levitch** will be on hand Saturday evening and offer his handicapping advice during a special segment of "**Churchill Downs Today**."

Levitch, who became the head men's basketball coach of North Oldham High School following his graduation from the University of Louisville, enjoys spending his free time at Churchill Downs and racetracks throughout the country. On Saturday, Levitch will be interviewed by TwinSpires.com analyst **Ed DeRosa** on "Churchill Downs Today" and will join fellow Churchill Downs handicappers **Joe Kristufek** and **Scott Shapiro** during Race 2 for his "Slam Dunk" of the night.

To celebrate the theme of "**Horses & Hoops**," fans are encouraged to wear Cardinals gear to this one-of-a-kind experience. Gates will open at 5 p.m. and the first race is 6 p.m. The spacious 30,000-square-foot Plaza adjacent to the saddling paddock will showcase pulsating live entertainment featuring the Cardinals' men's and women's basketball teams on a portable court. The entertainment line-up will include official DJ for the Louisville Cardinals, **DJ K-Dogg**, who will spin game-time favorites from the Plaza stage.

UofL's 1986 NCAA Championship men's basketball team, guided by then future Hall of Fame Coach **Denny Crum**, will participate in the festivities and will be available to sign autographs prior to the Louisville Live main feature at 7:15 p.m.

Two specialty cocktails will be sold at the Old Forester Paddock Bar and the Spend a Buck Bar on the second floor of the Clubhouse in the Food Court: "The Cardinal Crush" and "The Slam Dunk."

General admission to Downs After Dark is \$12 and includes an official program. Guests under the age of 18 will only be admitted to the track if accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Limited premium dining packages are available starting at \$76 per person. Outdoor-third floor box seats are on sale for \$27 per person. Reserved seating can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets.

FOLEY BELIEVES SCONSIN 'READY TO ROLL' IN REMATCH VERSUS BELL'S THE ONE IN SATURDAY'S OPEN MIND – Trainer **Greg Foley** believes his mare **Sconsin** is ready for a top effort as she renews her rivalry with fellow graded stakes winner **Bell's the One** in Saturday's \$300,000 Open Mind at Churchill Downs.

"We took her up to Saratoga this summer (in the Grade I, \$500,000 Ballerina) and she ended up fourth that day, beaten about three lengths for all of it by **Gamine**," Foley said. "They went :23 and :45 in there and for whatever reason she was pretty far back with not a lot of pace. She got beat a neck for third but ran her race up there. We got her back to Churchill, which is home. She's doing great, feeling good, licking her feed tub clean every day and I think will have no issues running back in just three weeks."

Owned by **Fred Schwartz' Lloyd Madison Farms**, Sconsin faced **Lothenbach Stable's** Bell's the One several times in her career including in the \$110,000 Roxelana three months ago. In the 6 1/2-furlong sprint at Churchill Downs, Bell's the One passed Sconsin in deep stretch for a three-quarters of a length win. Four starts ago, Sconsin finished ahead of Bell's the One in the \$500,000 Derby City Distaff (GI) but both were ultimately defeated by Gamine.

"(Bell's the One) is a really nice horse," Foley said. "This field only drew five but it's a tough enough group. We've beat her and she's beat us. It'll be a fun race."

Saturday's Open Mind was carded as Race 3 of 11 with a post time of 6:56 p.m. It is the first of five stakes events on the card and shares the spotlight with the \$300,000 Iroquois (Grade III), \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII) and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

The complete field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Mundaye Call** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 7-2); Sconsin (Tyler Gaffalione, Foley, 8-5); **Ain't No Elmers** (Adam Beschizza, Bret Calhoun, 4-1); **Jungle Juice (IRE)** (Alex Achard, Anna Meah, 20-1); and Bell's the One (Corey Lanerie, Neil Pessin, 7-5).

SEPTEMBER MEET HANDICAPPING INFORMATION – Racing fans have a one-stop shop for all of their Churchill Downs handicapping information on www.churchilldowns.com/handicapping.

The special section on the Churchill Downs website features free expert selections from handicappers **Joe Kristufek**, **Ed DeRosa** and **Scott Shapiro** along with links to special promotions on TwinSpires.com and Brisnet.com.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Friday's 10-race program at Churchill Downs had a first post of 12:45 p.m. and a Derby City Jackpot carryover of \$1,964. Racing on Friday will be broadcast on Fox Sports 2 from 12:30-5:30 p.m. ... Trainer **Bernie Flint** was one win away from 500-career victories at Churchill Downs. He had one entry in Race 1 Friday. ... The stakes history pages for the 22 stakes races held in the September and Fall Meets are available at www.kentuckyderby.com/media. ... **Churchill Downs Today** will be streamed one-hour before each race day on Churchill Downs' Twitter and YouTube accounts. Fans can watch all of the races and bet on www.TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated. ... Congratulations to Churchill Downs-based jockey **David Cohen** who was named as a finalist to the Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

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